

THE NATIONAL ERA.

WASHINGTON, APRIL 3, 1851.

Subscribers will please remember, as their subscriptions run out, that the postage on the *Era*, after the 30th of June, will be about one-half what it is now. We hope they will bear in mind too that we rely upon them as our best agents for keeping up and extending the circulation of the paper. Let them may have forgotten, we republish the terms:

Three—two dollars per annum, always payable in advance.

Every subscriber receiving his subscription, and sending to the N. E. W. subscribers, shall have three copies for five dollars. Clubs: five copies for eight dollars; ten copies for fifteen dollars.

"AMERICAN TELEGRAPH" is the title of a penny daily, lately commenced in this city by Connelly, Wimer, & McGill. It is a neatly printed, interesting paper, and Mr. Connelly is already very favorably known to the public, through his connection with the *Republican*, as local editor. The enterprise deserves well of our citizens, and bids fair to succeed.

THE INFLUENCE OF ONE MAN.

From March 7th, 1850, to March 31st, 1851, the most prominent, if not the most attractive object in the political world, has been Daniel Webster. During that period he has reached an eminence higher, if not more enviable, than was ever his lot before.

The 7th of March, 1850, witnessed his sudden, unexpected, total repudiation of the Ordinance of 1787 in its application to United States Territory—a policy which by his position as a Massachusetts Whig, by his long course of opposition to the extension of slavery, by his speeches, letters, and declarations, innumerable, he had been solemnly, and in the judgment of the public, irrevocably committed. That act shocked his friends and amazed his enemies; filled one section of his country with joy; the other, with sorrow, shame, and indignation. Had not the death of General Taylor opened the way for a new Cabinet, the close of Mr. Webster's Senatorial term would have afforded the People of Massachusetts an opportunity to show their sense of his political apostasy, by permitting him to retire from public life. But, the accession of Mr. Fillmore prevented him from falling into their hands.

From that hour, slaveholders and their allies, without distinction of Party, determined that this signal act of treachery to Northern Principles should be rewarded with signal honors; it would never do to overlook the claims of a statesman who had risked so much in their behalf. Under the pressure of their influence, Mr. Fillmore was prevailed upon to interpose between him and his constituents, and to assign him the highest place in his Administration, of the future character of which, the appointment was an infallible indication.

From that day to this, by the contrivances of his friends and of himself, he has been constantly kept before the American People, and an act, which ought to have overwhelmed him with political odium, has been held up as an infallible claim to their admiration and confidence. Let us review some of these contrivances.

A circular letter, expressive of high approbation of his conduct, a sort of testimonial to character, is circulated by his zealous partisans for signatures, and when, by every appeal to good nature, to policy, to personal friendship, to old attachments, the requisite number of signatures has been obtained, their names are paraded in the newspapers to show how well the great statesman is sustained in his apostasy.

Next follow gratulatory letters from Doctors of Divinity, imposed upon in their secluded retreats by the notion that the Union was about to fall, when Daniel Webster with a noble daring stepped forward, put his Atlantic shoulders under the massive pile, which now only stands by his strength.

Greetings from Democratic veterans, trained champions of slavery, are next in order. Old Party animosities are forgotten in the gush of warm gratitude to this new Saviour of the Union.

Then come addresses and letters from Union meetings, daily chronicling the perils of the crisis, and the deeds of the man who has been willing to sacrifice himself in the effort to avert them.

To all these testimonials Mr. Webster returns prompt and patriotic answers, dwelling upon the Union and the Constitution, as if for the first time the People needed to be informed of the obligations of the one or the blessings of the other, and as if the first discoverer of both were Daniel Webster.

Quite opportunely, a mob of a few negroes in the city of Boston rescues by surprise from the custody of a deputy marshal, his guard, an alleged fugitive from slavery. What a famous occasion for a display of the sublimated attributes of the Government—the of its inextinguishable determination to vindicate the Majesty of the Laws, of its noble heroism in behalf of the Union! A proclamation, necessary preliminary to the use of the War Power, as lightning precludes the thunder, strikes the country. The telegraphic wires are kept hot with the fervors of patriotism which quivers along them, as the illustrious Secretary of State receives from and sends to his Boston commissioner alarm-messages. The clash of arms is heard, as the army is put in motion, and the rattling of chains tells that the navy is getting underway.

With such dread preparations to catch a poor runaway, and punish the few negroes who, after taking him from a sleepy deputy, went quietly about their business, who can doubt that the illustrious Secretary of State and his President are equal to all emergencies, and that the Union and the Constitution are safe in their custody?

But, the immortality gained on this famous occasion, is not enough. The honor and humanity of the Government have been beautifully illustrated by the untiring Secretary. An unfortunate note from the Austrian Government gave him an opportunity to magnify the power and resources of our glorious Republic, and show off a considerable amount of Fourth of July "pluck" against Foreign Despots. No special necessity existed for the disclosure of the correspondence—it could answer no purpose, unless to tickle the national vanity and afford an opportunity to Mr. Webster's partisans for a little glorification; but it was called for by Senatorial resolution, and held before the American People.

The same contrivance brought out the same correspondence between Mr. Webster and his compatriots in captivity. And then followed an epistolary correspondence between the venerable schoolmaster and his venerable pupil, with due note of the substantial gratitude of the latter, and another correspondence, concerning a carriage, brace of horses and harness, which was handsomely acknowledged by the Secretary, with eloquent allusion to the Union and Constitution, elegantly garnished with classic quotation.

The latest effort at glorification is a dinner given to him at Annapolis, by the Constitutional Convention of Maryland, in session at that place. Whig and Democrat united to do him honor. The lion and the lamb lay down together, and a political millennium made its advent in Annapolis. The President, and Daniel Webster, and Henry Clay, and General Cass, and General Foote, were toasted and drunk by Jew and Gentile, Greek and Barbarian. It was a Pentecost of good feeling, only, instead of speaking in many tongues, all were made to speak in one tongue, and that was burdened with the praises of Daniel Webster.

A change of opinion and position is not necessarily blameworthy or creditable. The politician who abandons a wrong course for a right one, does well, and deserves the praise of a well-doer. It was the change from a right to a wrong position that brought down upon the head of Mr. Webster the reprobation of the best men generally of the North.

Nor do we blame the South for seeking to exalt him for his services. He is a mean citizen that defrauds his advocate. The upholders of slavery are wise in honoring the politicians who venture something to favor its interests. And we feel disposed to pity, rather than denounce, the well-meaning gentlemen, not much versed in politics, who, put in terror by imaginary dangers to the Union, have offered up income to Mr. Webster, as the saviour of the country in a dark and threatening hour. But there is a large class of trading politicians who care nothing for Truth, Justice, or Mercy—who have no conceptions of National Well-Being, that do not connect themselves with pecuniary or other personal interests; and who hope to share in what they suppose the rising fortunes of Mr. Webster. To them he is largely indebted for these systematic efforts to keep him before the country. They would prepare perfectly indifferent as to the combinations of parties by which it might be effected, or as to what old issues it might become necessary to overlook.

The example of Mr. Webster shows how far a statesman of high position and commanding talent may defy the public sentiment of his particular section of the Union, and yet retain place, power, and reputation. Had Mr. Webster maintained his original ground on the Territorial Question, scarcely a prominent man in his party would have dared to abandon the Wilmot Proviso. He changed, and whole battalions went over with him; the eloquence and influence of distinguished politicians and ecclesiastics were at once enlisted in his defence; and his party ceased, as such, to support the policy of Slavery Restriction by positive law. The time may come when this example of defection from the Right, may encourage the defection from the Wrong of some equally distinguished statesman in another quarter. Some Southern man of exalted position and talent, arriving at the conclusion that the highest welfare of the Republic demands the abolition of Slavery, and that this can be effected without serious detriment to the interests of any considerable class, may at some future time feel it his duty to announce openly his convictions, and rally around him the many citizens of the South, who now in secret deplore the evils of Slavery, but from prudential considerations suppress their opinions.

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ment of political rights. What if her standing army at home has been reduced to fifty thousand men, while that of France has been augmented to four or five hundred thousand—at the first tap of an invader's drum, could we suppose France mad enough, to dream of elements at work in her own bowels, to every man of English soil would be transformed into a soldier, more formidable than the best drilled mercenary that breathes. It is a mistake to suppose that the martial virtues are best cultivated by the unavailing, slothful performance of camp duty in times of peace. That nation will be found to be most dangerous in war, whose citizens in peace are left at liberty to develop their energies in fearful struggles with adversity, or in the daring pursuits of fortune, while the products of their ever-working energies, instead of being wasted in useless war-armaments, go to the aggrandizement of national power, and the multiplication of national resources. The same causes which, as some suppose, have been operating unfavorably upon the warlike character, or, rather, the courage and daring of the English people, have been in full operation in this country; but we all know with what eagerness, at the first signal of war, our peace-loving, peace-drilled people sprang at the throat of the Republic of Mexico, and that, too, in a war pronounced by more than one-half of them to be unjust and aggressive. The *Southern Press* has mistaken the character of the English People, their condition and resources. Never were they more powerful, more courageous, more capable of prolonged endurance, able to outlast deadly blows than they are now. Abroad and at home, their Government has shown itself equal to all emergencies. When a year or two since its empire in the Indies was menaced by the Sikhs, with what unflinching energy it met the danger, and vindicated its supremacy! And at home, did it betray any signs of debility, when Rebellion lifted its front in Ireland, and Chartism threatened the throne in London? The wrongs of Ireland have always commanded our sympathy, and excited our indignation against her oppressor; and we have ever bid God-speed to the efforts of the masses in England to secure equal political rights; but bloody revolution in Great Britain is not the way to redress wrong, or establish right, any more than in this country; and we rejoiced when we saw with what irresistible might the Government crushed the spirit of insurrection, and upheld the cause of order.

The *Southern Press* exaggerates the dangers to be apprehended from France. That Republic is warlike, but she is not so stable in her domestic affairs, or so prosperous, that she can afford to provoke lightly such a Power as England. No Frenchman now dreams of the conquest of Great Britain, and the *Southern Press* pays but a poor compliment to the "poor, ruddy" population of France, when it supposes that the immense wealth of London must prove a provocative to its appetite for plunder. We were not aware that the robber-instinct was characteristic of the French people. The history of the late revolution, when the masses of Paris, indoctrinated as they were with the ideas of Socialism, had possession of that rich capital, and command of its piles of wealth, and yet prohibited plunder under pain of death, scarcely gives countenance to the notion that the treasures of London are as inviting to the poor people of France, that they will seize the first opportunity to make a descent upon England for the sake of plunder.

There is nothing in the circumstances of the two Powers, nothing in their relations to each other, nothing in their relations to Europe generally, which threatens to embroil them. On the contrary, they belong to the same great system of Representative Government, and they are equally interested in maintaining political institutions, founded to a great extent in common upon the doctrine of Popular Sovereignty, against the aggressive designs of Russian and Austrian Despotism.

Correspondents are not always as reasonable as they ought to be. Some of them deem their communications of so much importance that they are apt to get out of humor, if obliged to wait for their publication. We are disposed to be as obliging as possible, but our sheet is not gum elastic. There are communications now on our table, and in our pigeon-holes, enough all the *Era* for a month to come to the exclusion of every thing else. We cannot so crowd them upon our readers as we would, so to deprive them of that variety of entertainment which they have a right to look for. Some time ago, a correspondent who had furnished us some articles on a subject largely discussed in our columns, not seeing them in our paper as soon as he expected, sent us a note withdrawing his subscription. He is welcome to do so, his articles will be disposed of without the slightest reference to that fact. Another, impatient of waiting, publishes his communication in another paper. We had intended to publish it, but this will save us the necessity. The closing paragraph shows that the whole article was written under a misapprehension of our views.

We copy it for the purpose of correcting it: "Now, as an example of wrong and wicked legislation, I would name the late law of Congress for the reclamation of fugitive slaves."

"I understand you (through the opinion that the law is unjust) to recommend passive obedience to it. Now I insist, dear friend, that justice will never reverse its own judgment, no matter whose ox is gored. For example, let us suppose that all the slaves at present in bondage escape, and evade a letter calling his attention to certain alleged post office irregularities, are worthy the consideration of our brethren of the press."

"These editors who complain do not labor in the details of the office. Many of them compile the following correspondence, and evade a letter calling his attention to certain alleged post office irregularities, are worthy the consideration of our brethren of the press."

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since, we received from Indiana and Illinois, from day to day, considerable numbers of letters, dated about the middle of February, and which had been a month on their way to Washington. Nor will it explain how it happened that for two or three weeks in succession, during the same period, the packages of the *Era* for several post offices in those States failed entirely of reaching their points of destination, though no change of any kind had been made in our office, and no complaint of such irregularity had ever been made before.

The American Papers from the City of New York, publishes letters from the Rev. Edward Matthews, giving an account of his barbarous treatment in Kentucky.

Mr. Matthews, it seems, is an agent of the American Free Mission Society, and, in the exercise of his agency, visited that State, and took occasion to advocate from the pulpit anti-slavery sentiments. Not long since, in the village of Richmond, Madison county, he applied to several churches for permission to lecture on the moral and religious condition of the slaves, but was unsuccessful. February 1st, in the evening, he preached to the colored congregation of that place, after which he was assailed by a mob and driven from the town. Returning in a short time, he left a communication respecting the transaction at the office of the *Richmond Chronicle*, and again departed, but had not gone far, before he was overtaken by four men, who seized him, and led him to an out-of-the-way place, where they consulted as to what they should do with him. They resolved to duck him, ascertaining first that he could swim. Two of them took him and threw him into a pond, as far as they could, and, on his rising to the surface, bade him come out. He did so, and, on his refusing to promise never to come back, they flung him in again. This operation was repeated four times, when he yielded. They next demanded of him a promise that he would leave Kentucky and never return again. He refused to give it, and they threw him in the water six times more, when, his strength failing, and they threatening to whip him, he gave the pledge required, and left the State.

We do not know anything about Mr. Matthews or his mode of promulgating his views. The laws in Kentucky for the protection of what is called "Slave-Property" are stringent enough, and nobody doubts the readiness of Public Sentiment to enforce their heaviest penalties against offenders. If Mr. Matthews violated the law, he should have been tried by the law, and he would have been, had he committed an illegal act. No charge of the kind is made against him.

He was, then, the victim of Lynch law, administered in a ruffian manner, and without provocation; and the parties concerned in the transaction, whatever their position in society, were guilty of conduct as cowardly as it was brutal.

As to the manner in which Mr. Matthews has conducted himself in Kentucky, we know nothing. We transfer to our columns the following extract from an editorial in the *Journal and Messenger* of Cincinnati, a Baptist paper, and which, it may be presumed, speaks intelligently on the subject:

"Mr. Matthews is likewise a Baptist minister, whose ostensible mission is one of love. If he has violated that mission, or any law, he is amenable to God and law, and not to LAWLESS VIOLENCE. His going to Kentucky is a matter of conscience to him, in which he has a right to decide. Many good anti-slavery men would question the wisdom of such a step. None would doubt his wisdom. Many, as a matter of fact and propriety, cannot admit the way in which he is reported to do his work. But they believe he is conscientious, and they know that 'oppression maketh even a wise man mad.' We do not think, in obedience to Christ's command, he sufficiently counted the cost of no one in this position should go to Kentucky to agitate the question of slavery, unless he expects to die. No man in this position, which Mr. Matthews occupies, can do it, without falling a martyr. Liberty of speech is a thing of no account to a man in this position. Slavery could not exist for a moment if it did. It is the doubtless duty of the Christian, not to surrender his life cheaply for the sake of being a martyr. That would be an unholty motive. It is his duty to preserve it until the last moment. So Christ enjoins. It is no mark of cowardice to flee. When they persecute you in one city, flee into another. The Savior said, 'He that will save his life shall lose it; and he that will lose his life shall save it.' That would be an unholty motive. It is his duty to preserve it until the last moment. So Christ enjoins. It is no mark of cowardice to flee. When they persecute you in one city, flee into another. The Savior said, 'He that will save his life shall lose it; and he that will lose his life shall save it.' That would be an unholty motive. It is his duty to preserve it until the last moment. So Christ enjoins. It is no mark of cowardice to flee. When they persecute you in one city, flee into another. The Savior said, 'He that will save his life shall lose it; and he that will lose his life shall save it.' That would be an unholty motive. It is his duty to preserve it until the last moment. So Christ enjoins. It is no mark of cowardice to flee. When they persecute you in one city, flee into another. The Savior said, 'He that will save his life shall lose it; and he that will lose his life shall save it.' That would be an unholty motive. It is his duty to preserve it until the last moment. So Christ enjoins. It is no mark of cowardice to flee. When they persecute you in one city, flee into another. The Savior said, 'He that will save his life shall lose it; and he that will lose his life shall save it.' That would be an un